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ABSTRACT

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools reports on the Task Force on Baccalaureate Education in the Community College Setting. This particular report is in response to a 1998 request from a community college to have its accreditation extended to a few competency-based programs leading to a Bachelor of Applied Technology. The Board of Trustees responded to this precedent-setting request by: (1) creating a special team to monitor the development and delivery of this first competency degree program and postponing making a decision on extending accreditation to the program--the Board will consider the request after the graduation of the first cohort of students; and (2) calling for the establishment of a Task Force to study the changing contexts of baccalaureate education in the community college setting. The Task Force made four recommendations: (1) that the commission consider requests for some B.A. degree programs in community colleges; (2) that the commission apply established criteria in the consideration of these requests; (3) that the commission develop guidelines and good practices for unique institutional situations to inform decision-making and team evaluations; and (4) that the commission consider developing a third-party, quality review program appropriate for higher education centers. (NB)

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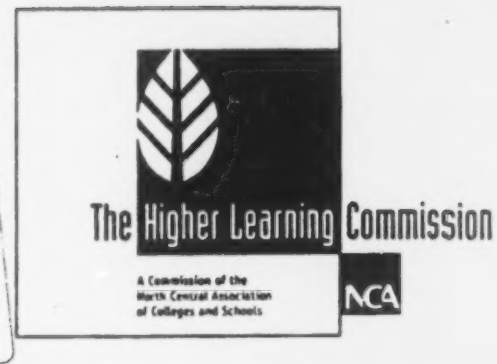

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TO: Chief Executive Officers of Institutions Affiliated with The Higher Learning Commission
Other Stakeholders in the Commission's Work

FROM: Steven D. Crow, Executive Director

RE: Report and Recommendations: The Task Force on Baccalaureate Education in the Community College Setting

When the Commission received its first request to extend the accreditation of a community college to include a new applied baccalaureate degree, it made two decisions:

1. to collaborate with that institution through the design and implementation of its unique program and then invite its request for extension of accreditation as part of the institution's comprehensive evaluation;

2. to create a Task Force with the charge to study the various ways in which quality baccalaureate education is currently provided in community college settings, to study the forces behind extending the community college mission to include the offering of baccalaureate education, and to recommend to the Commission the most appropriate and most effective strategy(ies) to follow in extending accreditation to baccalaureate education in community college settings.

The Board asked that the Task Force complete its work by February 2001 when it would report to the Board. It also called on the Task Force to respond to its report during the 2001 Annual Meeting.

The Task Force submitted its report and recommendations to the Board for the Board's February 23, 2001, meeting. The Board received the report, thanked the Task Force for its work, and asked that the report be submitted to the membership for review and comment. Enclosed you will find the full report and the Task Force's executive summary of it.

At its June 22 meeting, the Board will revisit the Task Force's recommendations. **The Board welcomes any comments you might wish to make.** You can address them to me using:

- the Commission address,
- my email (scrow@hlcommission.org),
- or our fax (312-263-7462).

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Moreover, during the Annual Meeting two sessions will be devoted to discussion of the report and recommendations. One session will be held during the Program for Presidents on Sunday, April 1 (1:45–2:30 P.M.), and the other will be held during the General Program on Tuesday, April 3 (8:45–9:45 A.M.). A summary of those sessions will be provided to the Board as well.

I hope you will take advantage of one or more of these opportunities to share in shaping the Commission's position on this issue. Please feel free to circulate the document to others at your institution who might have an interest in commenting. The documents are available on our web site at **www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org** (click the link under "What's New on this Site" or type in the full address: www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/bacc_ed_cc/).

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Baccalaureate Education in the Community College Setting

The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Task Force Executive Summary with Recommendations
February 23, 2001

BACKGROUND

In August 1998, the Executive Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (after January 1, 2001, The Higher Learning Commission) presented to the Board of Trustees the first institutional request from a community college to have its accreditation extended to a few competency-based programs leading to a Bachelor of Applied Technology. Because of the precedent-setting nature of this request, the Board decided to follow a unique course of action:

- It created a special team to monitor the development and delivery of the first competency degree program (with the team conducting periodic advisory visits) and postponed a decision on extending accreditation to the new baccalaureate program. At the end of the fourth year, after the graduation of the first cohort of students, the Board will consider the institution's request.
- It called for the establishment of this Task Force to study the changing contexts of baccalaureate education in the community college setting. It charged the Task Force "to study the various ways in which quality baccalaureate education is currently provided in community college settings, to study the forces behind extending the community college mission to include the offering of baccalaureate education, and to recommend to the Commission the most appropriate and most effective strategy(ies) to follow in extending accreditation to baccalaureate education in community college settings."

TASK FORCE ON BACCALAUREATE EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

The membership of the Task Force reflected the Board's fundamental expectation of all task forces. Namely, the members represented a variety of institutions, including community colleges and baccalaureate degree granting institutions, private as well as public institutions. Faculty and chief administrative officers served. At least one participant had previous legislative experience. One member was a state higher education executive officer. Three members came from outside the region, two representing specific national organizations (American Association of Community Colleges and Association of American Colleges and Universities) and one coming from another regional accrediting association. One public member participated. These members together with the Commission's Executive Director and an Associate Director/Institutional Liaison participated in a tightly-structured intensive process facilitated by a highly experienced person familiar with the community colleges and with the Commission.

Received February 23, 2001 – Recommendations yet to be adopted.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE

Comprehensive community colleges constitute one-third of the institutions holding affiliation with the Commission. Because of their community-based missions, they have proven to be exceptionally adept at understanding the higher education needs of the communities they serve and responding with the creation of a rich variety of degrees, certificates, and credit and non-credit courses. They are serving as a major point of access to higher education for all types of students. Through hosting of "2+2" programs and sponsoring or participating in higher education centers, community colleges have worked—and continue to work—to make baccalaureate education accessible. By providing two year programs that articulate almost seamlessly into baccalaureate programs offered by other institutions, community colleges have also made baccalaureate education more affordable for many students. If all of these extraordinary assets would be placed in jeopardy by the extension of the accreditation of community colleges to include some baccalaureate offerings, then the Commission would be wise in granting that extension very infrequently if at all.

Mindful of the Commission's recently-adopted mission statement—"Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning"—the Task Force studied the various contexts in which baccalaureate education is and can be offered on community college campuses and in higher education centers. The Task Force focused on three primary models: (1) "2+2" programs where baccalaureate institutions offer on a community college campus one or more culminating years of the baccalaureate degree; (2) higher education centers where community colleges collaborate with baccalaureate institutions in developing and offering baccalaureate degrees; and (3) community colleges that offer the total baccalaureate degree program.

The Task Force concluded that accreditation standards and processes must expect all institutions providing baccalaureate education in a community college setting to weigh the offering against institutional mission and values, including an institutional commitment to enhance access. Those standards and processes also must allow for the evaluation of institutional capacity to assure academic quality, program integrity, adequate resource support, and effective governance and oversight. Moreover, standards and processes need to be flexible enough to accommodate rapid change and to allow the Commission to be responsive to unique institutional circumstances as well as open to creative partnerships between and among educational organizations.

The Task Force engaged in significant discussions about the purpose and content of baccalaureate education, specifically the new "applied" or competency-based baccalaureate degrees. Many institutions are responding to the changing role of baccalaureate education in the new economic marketplace, particularly studying how best to balance the values of the academy with changing needs of students and the communities in which they live and work. Community colleges are not alone in proposing alternative approaches to baccalaureate education, for existing baccalaureate degree granting institutions have and are creating new types of baccalaureate programs, including but not limited to the Bachelor's in Applied Science (B.A.S.) and the Bachelor's in Applied Technology (B.A.T.). The Task Force concluded that the academy will be well-served by several current national projects focused on the content and structure of baccalaureate education, on the role of general education in the degree, and on the balance between applied and theoretical learning that should be achieved in sound baccalaureate education.

The four recommendations that follow are grounded in a consensus of the Task Force on these expectations:

(a) General education must remain central to baccalaureate education even if its well-defined functional competencies might be gained through contextual learning techniques instead of traditional courses.

(b) The academy should expect that baccalaureate education have durability and flexibility that supports life-long learning. In short, applied baccalaureate education is not terminal.

(c) The central role of the faculty in curriculum design should be protected, as well as the fundamental commitment to freedom of academic inquiry. Faculty, however, should design curricula that respond to the needs of the communities and students they serve.

(d) Accountability to external constituencies and assessment of achieved learning hold for all baccalaureate curricula, whether applied or traditional.

(e) The offerings of a small number of baccalaureate degrees can be done by a community college without its abdication of the mission to serve a community with a rich variety of certificate and associate degree programs.

(f) Through accrediting policies and careful attention to its procedures, the Commission can respond appropriately to a community college wishing to enhance its service to the community through the addition of a small number of baccalaureate degrees to is program offerings.

(g) Competent peer review in these settings will require well-selected and trained evaluators.

(h) By developing and disseminating guidelines and good practices, the Commission can contribute to the quality of all baccalaureate offerings in community college settings.

The full Task Force report explains in significant detail the depth and breadth of the Task Force's discussions.

FORMAL TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The Task Force recommends that the Commission, through its current institutional change processes, consider requests from a community college to offer some programs leading to baccalaureate degrees. In making the recommendation, the Task Force also expects that the Commission will assure that accreditation policies and processes measure an institution against its stated mission.

In making this recommendation, the Task Force concluded that the offering of a small number of baccalaureate degrees should not automatically negate the mission-driven culture of a community college heavily invested in delivering two year programs. Moreover, the Commission has precedent it can follow. It can treat such changes in ways similar to those it currently uses in extending accreditation of baccalaureate institutions to include a limited number of graduate programs. That is, the Commission expects that the request follows the Commission's protocols for requesting approval of institutional change, including the provision of a needs analysis that establishes the program's response to a clear unmet market. Moreover, the Commission in extending accreditation to the higher degree level often restricts it to a specific program or to a limited number of specific programs. At some point, if the institution is actually transforming into a baccalaureate institution, it will need to seek recognition of the changed institutional status and its maturity in assuring quality in baccalaureate education generally.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: The Task Force recommends that in evaluating the request of a community college to offer baccalaureate education, the Commission apply established criteria, requirements, and expectations for general education, institutional capacity, commitment of resources, and assessment of achieved student learning for the baccalaureate program.

All accrediting decisions should be informed by the expectation that the institution's integrity demands that its baccalaureate program(s) be as effective as those provided by baccalaureate institutions. While being open to new approaches to providing general education and evaluating its effectiveness on student learning, the Commission should expect that the baccalaureate degrees offered by the community college lead to the same competencies expected of students enrolled in similar degrees in other settings. Moreover, the Commission should expect a community college to have the capacity–including financial commitment, qualified faculty, effective student services, and access to adequate learning resources– to ensure the effectiveness of the baccalaureate degree program(s) and the learning of students enrolled in them. The institution's program of measuring student learning should be extended to include the new baccalaureate program(s).

RECOMMENDATION THREE: The Task Force recommends that the Commission develop guidelines and good practices for unique institutional situations to inform institutional decision-making and team evaluations.

Guidelines help institutions measure their capacity to deliver baccalaureate education in community college settings, whether they be baccalaureate institutions providing "+2" offerings on community college campuses or community colleges offering their own baccalaureate programs. Guidelines should be written to inform and facilitate responsiveness to change, not to stifle it. Moreover, in the hands of trained Commission evaluators these guidelines should be perceived as useful tools to inform the application of existing criteria and requirements, not as an independent set of criteria, requirements, or standards.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: The Task Force suggests that the Commission consider developing a third-party, quality review program appropriate for higher education centers.

Although the Task Force's focus was largely on community colleges intending to offer baccalaureate education, some members concluded that multi-institutional higher education centers present a unique opportunity for the Commission. If non-degree granting higher education centers want some form of Commission recognition, then the Commission might wish to provide for them a new certification program related to but not equivalent to accreditation. Such a program might, among other matters, address how centers can honor the academic integrity of each participating institution.

– end of Executive Summary –

Baccalaureate Education in the Community College Setting

The Higher Learning Commission
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Task Force Meeting Report
October 31 – November 1, 2000

BACKGROUND

The Higher Learning Commission (prior to January 1, 2001, known as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education) has for several years evaluated baccalaureate education provided on community college campuses. Typically that education has been provided by an institution—public or private—already accredited to offer baccalaureate programs. Usually the programs have been closely articulated with the first two years of courses and programs provided by the community college. These "2+2" programs almost always involved the use of community college classrooms and access for the baccalaureate students to the learning resources center and other appropriate laboratories. Sometimes appropriately-credentialed community college faculty served as adjunct faculty for the baccalaureate institution; in some cases the baccalaureate college also contracted with the community college to provide some of the student support services. In a few situations the arrangements were facilitated through a higher education center—complete with facilities and staff—located on the community college campus.

The Commission evaluation of these programs and arrangements typically occurred as part of an evaluation of the institution responsible for granting the baccalaureate degree. Comprehensive evaluation teams included all or a sample of the "2+2" sites; alternatively, a focused evaluation team reviewed one or more of them as "new degree sites" when the baccalaureate degree-granting institution sought extension of its accreditation to include these sites. Very seldom did the accreditation evaluation of the community college include a review of the role and nature of these programs.

Within the past three years, other options are being proposed to this well-established method of providing baccalaureate education in the community college setting. They (referred to as CC/BA models) include the following:

1. Community college courses counting for up to three years of the credit toward the baccalaureate degree, with the baccalaureate granting institution providing a year of courses either on campus or through eLearning;
2. Community colleges developing a limited number of baccalaureate programs focused particularly, but not solely, on specific applied fields of study (e.g., manufacturing technology, police studies); and
3. Community college converting to a baccalaureate institution (multiple degree offerings) while maintaining a strong component of two-year programs meant to fulfill the community college mission.

Received February 23, 2001 – Recommendations yet to be adopted.

Technology and rapid development of new eLearning courses and support services contribute to the complexity of potential options. New national providers of baccalaureate education have emerged ready to strengthen "2+2" options as well as the capacity of the community college to mount its own baccalaureate program(s). Moreover, several baccalaureate degree granting institutions have developed new focused degrees usually carrying the title of Bachelor of Applied Science (B.A.S.) o Bachelor of Applied Technology (B.A.T.) meant to meet specific employer needs as well as articulate closely with technical associate degrees.

In several states throughout the United States, community college leaders have mounted the argument that community colleges could offer baccalaureate degrees without sacrificing the community college mission. Legislative struggles so far have usually acted as a brake on this movement; but as legislators seek to support a higher education system responsive to access and to rapidly changing workforce needs, precedent-setting decisions will be made. So far legislators have usually decided to transform a community college into a baccalaureate degree granting college, acknowledging a change in mission as well as scope of educational enterprise. But that is not the stated desire of many who support the community college creation of some baccalaureate degrees. The legislative dialogue that has occurred about this issue in several states does not indicate that legislators seek the creation of more comprehensive baccalaureate institutions.

In August 1998, the Executive Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education presented to the Board of Trustees the first institutional request for one of these new options: a community college, following legislative mandate, sought extension of accreditation to include a competency-based program leading to a baccalaureate degree in applied technology. Because of the precedent-setting nature of this request, the Board decided to follow a unique course of action:

1. It chose not to extend accreditation of the college to include baccalaureate degrees, but to defer that decision for four years. It created a special team to monitor the development and delivery of the first competency degree program (with the team conducting periodic advisory visits). At the end of the fourth year, after the graduation of the first cohort of students, the Board will consider the institution's request. If the institution decides not to continue the program or if the Board decides not to extend accreditation to include it (and thereby allow its continuance), the Commission will nonetheless vouch for the few baccalaureate degrees granted to students enrolled in the experimental program.
2. It called for the establishment of a special Task Force to study the changing contexts of baccalaureate education in the community college setting, charging the Task Force with developing recommendations for the Board's consideration.

TASK FORCE ON BACCALAUREATE EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

The membership of the Task Force reflected the Board's fundamental expectation of all task forces as well as its stated expectation for this one. Namely, the members represented a variety of institutions, including community colleges and baccalaureate degree granting institutions, private as well as public institutions. Faculty and chief administrative officers served. At least one participant had previous legislative experience. One member represented the state higher education executive officers. Three members came from outside the region, two representing specific national organizations (American Association of Community Colleges and Association of American Colleges and Universities) and one coming from another regional accrediting association. One public member participated. At the last minute one invited participant was unable to attend (another person with long legislative experience).

The Commission staff was represented by the Executive Director and an Associate Director/ Institutional Liaison. Other staff supported the Task Force. Although not a formal member of the Task Force, a highly experienced facilitator ensured the effectiveness of its work through her leadership of the highly participative yet tightly structured meeting. Therefore, her name is included on the list of the Task Force participants found in the Appendix.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE

In welcoming the Task Force, the Executive Director reminded the Task Force of the Board's charge to it:

To study the various ways in which quality baccalaureate education is currently provided in community college settings, to study the forces behind extending the community college mission to include the offering of baccalaureate education, and to recommend to the Commission the most appropriate and most effective strategy(ies) to follow in extending accreditation to baccalaureate education in community college settings. The task force should complete its work by February 2001, report to the board of trustees and to the 2001 Annual Meeting.

He drew attention to the central questions the Task Force needed to address:

In each potential institutional configuration where baccalaureate education was provided in a community college setting:

- Who or what is driving the changes in conceptualizing and delivering a baccalaureate degree? The institution? Government? Employers? Community?
- What is the role of an accrediting agency in defining the mission of specific types of institutions?
- What is the meaning of a baccalaureate degree today?

Moreover, the Task Force was asked to ground their response to these questions in the Commission's new mission statement: "Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning."

By consensus, the Task Force accepted these goals for its work:

1. To identify the accreditation issues that are embedded in each of the variety of CC/BA models;
2. To explore the implications of these issues in order to inform the Commission decision-making about CC/BA; and,
3. To make recommendations to the Commission on policy and practice, including tools and standards that should apply to CC/BA.

CONSIDERING THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

To begin their deliberations, Task Force members organized into three discussion groups to identify the accreditation issues embedded in the CC/BA models: the "2+2", the higher education center, and the free-standing community college offering baccalaureate degrees. Reports from these three groups identified the common themes that emerged across the various settings. The first six speak primarily to institutional responsibilities (and thereby include fundamental questions appropriate for accreditation); while the last three speak to responsibilities of accrediting agencies (and thereby include fundamental challenges appropriate for institutions to raise).

1. *Centrality of Mission:* Are the baccalaureate programs congruent with and supportive of the stated institutional mission?
2. *Assurance of Quality:* Are the institution's structures, processes, and personnel capable of providing appropriate internal quality assurance for the baccalaureate programs?
3. *Integrity:* Does the institution's baccalaureate program meet the promises made about it by providing the students with appropriate skills, capabilities, and knowledge?
4. *Resources:* Does the institution have sufficient human, physical, and financial capacity to support the program without diluting support for its ongoing commitments?
5. *Governance and Oversight:* Is the program supported by clearly-established and well-followed lines of accountability and responsibility?
6. *Access:* If the program is meant to increase access to relevant baccalaureate education, does the program actually enhance access?
7. *Individuality of Institutional Circumstances:* Should accrediting standards and processes allow for programs that respond to specific and unique institutional circumstances (e.g., rural isolation, programs for specific local business)?
8. *Accreditation Processes for Change:* Are current accreditation standards and processes flexible enough and responsive enough to allow for effective and consistent third-party quality assurance in this rapidly changing environment?
9. *Value of Partnerships:* Do accrediting standards and processes support creative partnerships between and among educational organizations or encourage institutional autonomy and self-sufficiency?

ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY BACCALAUREATE EDUCATION

The Task Force found that there were also distinctive questions that emerged about the nature of the baccalaureate degree, specifically the new "applied" or competency-based baccalaureate degrees:

1. Is there ambiguity in the meaning of the degree?
2. What is the content of the degree?
3. What is the balance of application and theory in the baccalaureate curriculum?
4. What is the structure of the degree?

Inevitably any investigation of the offering of baccalaureate education in the community college setting must confront the broader issue of contemporary baccalaureate education. Community colleges are not alone in proposing alternative approaches to baccalaureate education, for current baccalaureate degree granting institutions have and are creating new types of baccalaureate programs, including but not limited to the Baccalaureate in Applied Science (B.A.S.) and the Baccalaureate in Applied Technology (B.A.T.). Moreover, considerable baccalaureate offerings are now available online. While some of the proposed community college constructs of baccalaureate education bring these approaches to the fore, they must be understood in the broader context of contemporary baccalaureate education.

Therefore, the Task Force turned to analyzing the key issues emerging about the meaning and content of contemporary baccalaureate education. Task Force members identified 30 topics that they saw as important to how we understand baccalaureate education today and then refined that list into three priority topics, each of which received focused attention.

1. *The role of the baccalaureate degree in the new economic marketplace:*
   - Possession of a baccalaureate degree is becoming fundamental to career access and career mobility.
   - Baccalaureate education needs to fulfill public needs including but not limited to fostering effective citizenship and ensuring U.S. preeminence in a global economy.
   - Baccalaureate providers will need to balance the values of the academy with changing needs of students and the communities in which they live and work. There must be dialogue in which the academy is "transparent" about what the academy can and is willing to do.
   - Competence means more than credit hours accumulated. Therefore, there should be more intentionality about the required curriculum. The challenge to the academy is to define and measure competence, however it is achieved.

2. *Specialized versus general or liberal arts education or the applied baccalaureate versus the regular baccalaureate:*
   - The academy would be well-served to engage in an overarching evaluation of the content and structure of baccalaureate education with focus on the role and nature of general education in the degree and the balance between applied and theoretical learning that should be achieved in baccalaureate education.
   - Within that context, appropriate hallmarks could be established for technical or applied baccalaureate programs. For example, such programs might be structured to emphasize technical preparation with general education designed to assure achievement of well-defined functional competencies that could be gained through contextual learning techniques.
   - While sensitive to the multiple and changing needs to be met by baccalaureate education, the academy should expect that baccalaureate education has durability and flexibility that supports life-long learning.

3. *The applied baccalaureate curriculum:*
   - The central role of the faculty in curriculum design should be protected, as well as the fundamental commitment to freedom of academic inquiry. This protection, however, should not lead to isolation of the academy from the community it serves. Although the academy in several fields currently shares responsibility with a particular profession in determining the content of a degree, the demand appears to be growing that more stakeholder needs and advice should be weighed in curriculum design.
   - The needs of the learner should be first and foremost, and those needs should not be defined simply by the demands of the first job. Faculty, therefore, need to ensure that the learner needs are met, not simply in competencies achieved but also in enhancing the student's capacity to move easily into other learning opportunities including pursuit of higher degrees. In short, applied baccalaureate education is not terminal.

- Accountability to external constituencies and assessment of achieved learning hold for all baccalaureate curricula, whether applied or traditional. Therefore, curricula must have clearly stated outcomes. Assessment programs must be robust enough to enable institutions to document the meeting of these outcomes as well as to allow faculty to modify the curriculum to enhance its effectiveness. This becomes even more important as faculty have the opportunities to create curriculum from products produced by a variety of providers, including businesses as well as other colleges.

In reflecting on the reports of these three groups, the Task Force members as a whole identified several topics that they saw as important to the understanding of the current debate about baccalaureate education provided by the community college. Grouped into two central topics, these include:

1. **Institutional culture.** Despite the fact that technology is shifting the faculty role in all institutions and thereby probably blurring differences that seem to mark faculty cultures at different types of institutions, several participants expressed concern that by offering of baccalaureate education, community college faculty may lose their commitment to the community college mission. Whether the faculty culture is requisite to effective baccalaureate education (and therefore supported by accrediting activities) or simply the product of tradition, participants identified these assumptions about that culture at baccalaureate institutions:

   1) The academic field shapes expectations for research and professional development of faculty.

   2) Faculty work load is defined to enable external, scholarly research.

   3) Expectations exist that full-time faculty largely, if not solely, control program design and instructional delivery.

2. **Competitive environment.** An understanding of marketplace competition is central to the discussion.

   - Competition is driving responsiveness by baccalaureate institutions resulting in their mounting associate degree programs and well as generating new applied baccalaureate programs even as they explore creative articulation efforts with two year institutions.
   - Public expects responsiveness of institutions to include addressing training needs, bringing expertise to the community, and providing access.
   - Because of history of responsiveness to business and industry, community college faculty do relevant applied research positioning them for effective response.
   - Funding mechanisms place a premium on important strategic decisions about the marketplace.

CREATING RECOMMMENDATIONS

The Task Force first generated a comprehensive list of potential recommendations it might make to the Board of Trustees of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Following its established practice, the Task Force first discussed the list and then organized to consider recommendations in four specific areas identified as most central to its work: institutional mission; general education and the applied baccalaureate; institutional capacity; and governance. Reports from these four groups are included here:

1. *Institutional Mission:*

   - **Apply Current Accreditation Requirements and Criteria.** All accrediting processes related to institutions offering baccalaureate education at a community college campus (whether that institution be the community college itself or another educational organization) should apply the current accrediting requirements and criteria that address the legal foundation for the mission, the institutional ownership of that mission, and the fit between institutional capacity and mission. Nothing suggests that a community college mission must exclusively be for two-year programs. And nothing suggests that the offering of a small number of baccalaureate programs automatically negates a community college mission to serve community needs.

   - **Consider Revisions.** The Commission's current definitions of institutional mission and purposes might be outdated. It should consider extending its expectations for accountability to include such defining documents as those that stipulate vision, values, and goals of the institution as well as the basic statement of mission. The Commission might wish to consider whether in policy or guidelines it wants to establish a statistical line that affects the appropriateness of the mission (e.g., if more than 50% of the offerings or 50% of the students are in baccalaureate education, can a community college mission still appropriately emphasize the institution's associate degrees and certificates?).

   - **Develop Guidelines.** Accreditation guidelines should address the importance of self-evaluation in the institution's consideration of offering baccalaureate education on the community college campus. A proposed regime of inquiry might challenge the institution to consider the change in light of its service to the common good, its understanding of good practices in baccalaureate degree programs, and its resource capacity to add baccalaureate education.

   - **Strengthen Capacity of Peer Review.** Training of peer reviewers should recognize the value of "mixed teams" for those institutions that blur the boundaries across institutional types.

2. *General Education and the Applied Baccalaureate:*

   - **Apply Current Accreditation Requirements and Criteria.** The baccalaureate degree offered at community colleges should meet the same high standards of intellectual skill development expected from degree programs offered by baccalaureate institutions both on and off campus. The basic expectations of General Institutional Requirement 16 and Criterion Three should be retained: general education must assure breadth and depth in the development of intellectual skills.

   - **Consider Revisions.** While basic expectations should remain, the Commission should consider redrafting some of its gloss to recognize the emergence of embedded skill development and competency measures in general education. Moreover, the gloss should encourage better articulation of general education objectives within and between partner institutions or between associate and baccalaureate levels. The gloss should also make clear that general intellectual skills should not be seen as the exclusive province of either the disciplines or the general education program.

   - **Strengthen Capacity of Peer Review.** Peer evaluator teams should include baccalaureate "experts" and open-mindedness among members when upper-division programs are reviewed. This expertise should include knowledge about embedded skill development, competency-based programs, and general education at the baccalaureate level. As a training issue, the accrediting agency should consider providing multiple models (perhaps online) of appropriate general education curricula or recommendations on best practice and breakthrough practices.

3. *Institutional Capacity:*

- **Apply Current Accreditation Requirements and Criteria.** The Commission has many appropriate hallmarks for institutional capacity. Moreover, its current processes for institutional change establish the importance of re-evaluating capacity when new changes are proposed. Therefore, for colleges developing baccalaureate programs in community college settings, financial capacity means that there are sufficient resources to provide a new program at the baccalaureate level without diminishing or diluting the quality of on-going programs. Physical capacity requires that new learning resources (information accessibility and library holdings) are available where baccalaureates are introduced. Human capacity requires faculty with appropriate credentials, role expectations, program integration and supervision, and professional development and scholarship support.
- **Develop Guidelines.** Because the baccalaureate offered by community colleges is relatively new, guidelines will be important. Teaching upper division requires changed mindsets and resources, with a distinctive role for faculty. The regime of inquiry should help an institution consider these changing expectations and how they anticipate meeting them.
- **Strengthen Capacity of Peer Review.** The formation of appropriate peer review teams will be critical to allow the existing accrediting agency process to be responsive to new contexts. Specific team training should be explored for these community college settings where a baccalaureate degree is offered.

4. *Governance:*

- **Apply Current Accreditation Requirements and Criteria.** The Commission establishes clear expectations about an institution's responsibility for courses and programs that culminate in that institution's degrees. Those expectations of baccalaureate degree granting institutions extend to off-campus degree programs whether conducted on a community college campus or through a higher education center. Clearly a community college offering its own baccalaureate degree would need to assure effective oversight imbedded within basic college structures of shared governance.
- **Consider Revisions.** By definition, most "2+2" programs involve collaboration. So, too, do many degree offerings at higher education centers demand creative sharing in the course offerings students can negotiate in developing a curricular path appropriate to a baccalaureate program. The Commission would be well-served to identify a variety of ways in which institutions can share responsibilities for articulated degrees. The Commission might also choose to consider the appropriateness of developing a quality assurance program specifically for higher education centers. Hallmarks for the development, organization, and operation of a higher education center could include an expectation that the need is identified, the mission of the center is articulated, the governance is clear, contractual arrangements are articulated and respected, student support is available, academic experience is cumulative, and marketing arrangements are agreed to. Formal recognition, endorsement, or certification (differing from accreditation) could be granted by an accrediting agency to those centers that meet the hallmarks.
- **Develop Guidelines.** The Commission could assist institutions contemplating or engaged in delivery of degrees that require articulation among two or more institutions. Such guidelines should address initiating processes for creating "2+2" programs and/or shared programs offered at a higher education center. Well constructed implementing processes could be informed by guidelines or good practices in coordination, particularly in creating controlling agreements that clearly estab-

lish the locus of responsibility. Best practices of successful higher education centers could be promulgated by the accrediting agency in order to support others exploring this option.

FORMAL TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION

Times are changing, demands for relevant baccalaureate education are growing, and once-clear lines of demarcation among various types of institutions are becoming blurred. Four-year institutions develop two-year programs and a variety of short-term certificate programs even as some community colleges explore the mounting of baccalaureate programs and a variety of short-term certificates that are actually post-baccalaureate in the students served. Increasingly associate degrees are not sufficient for access to professions as licensing is tied to mastery of an increased knowledge base. In addition, specialized knowledge appears to be growing at an exceptional rate, placing undue pressures on baccalaureate institutions alone to create relevant program offerings, particularly applied or technical degrees that are beyond their competence and capacity. Business and industry create the demands for new programs relevant in content, focused on achieved competencies, and accessible to all types of students, including those already in the workforce.

In light of these changes, many make a compelling argument that community colleges, by mission, must find appropriate ways to contribute to the capacity of the higher education community to respond to them, including the development and delivery of baccalaureate degrees. Others propose that existing baccalaureate institutions are changing to meet new market demands. Through collaboration and articulation with them, community colleges could share in building baccalaureate program capacity in the nation without moving down a path that might lead to institutional transformation. To all members of the Task Force, it is vitally important to maintain in the United States a rich diversity of institutions marked by distinctly different though complementary missions.

Comprehensive community colleges constitute one-third of the institutions holding affiliation with the Commission. Because of their community-based missions, they have proven to be exceptionally adept at understanding the higher education needs of the communities they serve and responding with the creation of a rich variety of degrees, certificates, and credit and non-credit courses responsive to those needs. They are serving as a major point of access to higher education for all types of students. Through hosting of "2+2" programs and sponsoring or participating in higher education centers, community colleges have worked—and continue to work—to make baccalaureate education accessible. By providing two year programs that articulate almost seamlessly into baccalaureate programs offered by other institutions, community colleges have also made baccalaureate education less expensive for many students. If all of these extraordinary assets would be placed in jeopardy by the extension of the accreditation of community colleges to include a small number of baccalaureate offerings, then the Commission would be wise in granting that extension very infrequently, if at all.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The Task Force recommends that the Commission, through its current institutional change processes, consider requests from a community college to offer some programs leading to baccalaureate degrees. In making the recommendation, the Task Force also expects that the Commission will assure that accreditation policies and processes measure an institution against its stated mission.

In making this recommendation, the Task Force expects that the Commission's accreditation will continue to support the primary mission and values of the institution. The offering of a limited number of baccalaureate degrees should not automatically negate the mission-driven culture of a community college heavily invested in delivering two year programs. The Task Force understands that in some situations, a community

college's mission might be significantly recast. In recent years, some community colleges in Ohio and Oklahoma were changed from two year to four year institutions by legislative mandate. The Commission's change processes worked effectively in those situations. The Task Force recommendations, therefore, speak primarily to situations in which community colleges seek to offer a small number of baccalaureate programs as an extension of the community college mission.

If the community college expects to retain its community college mission while mounting a limited number of baccalaureate degrees, the Commission has precedent it can follow. It should treat such changes in ways similar to those it currently uses in extending accreditation of baccalaureate institutions to include a limited number of graduate programs. That is, the Commission expects that the request follows the Commission's protocols for requesting approval of institutional change, including the provision of a needs analysis that establishes the program's response to a clear unmet market. Moreover, the Commission in extending accreditation to the higher degree level often restricts it to a specific program or to a limited number of specific programs. Therefore, when evaluating the request of the community college to offer a baccalaureate degree, the Commission should not decide that the offering of a single baccalaureate degree (or even the offering of two or three such degrees) automatically makes the institution a baccalaureate institution. If appropriate, accreditation should extend to the new level, but it should be restricted to specific degree programs. At some point, if the institution is actually transforming into a baccalaureate institution, it will need to seek recognition of the changed institutional mission and its maturity in assuring quality in baccalaureate education generally.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: The Task Force recommends that, in evaluating the request of a community college to offer baccalaureate education, the Commission apply established criteria, requirements, and expectations for general education, institutional capacity, commitment of resources, and assessment of achieved student learning for the baccalaureate program.

Students deserve an education worthy of the baccalaureate degree they are awarded. The institution's integrity demands that its baccalaureate program(s) be as effective as those provided by baccalaureate institutions, and such expectations should inform all accrediting decisions. While being open to new approaches to providing general education and evaluating its effectiveness on student learning, the Commission should expect that the baccalaureate degrees offered by the community college lead to the same competencies expected of students enrolled in similar degrees in other settings. Moreover, the Commission should expect a community college to have the capacity—including financial commitment, qualified faculty, effective student services, and access to adequate learning resources— to ensure the effectiveness of the baccalaureate degree program(s) and the learning of students enrolled in them.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: The Task Force recommends that the Commission develop guidelines and good practices for unique institutional situations to inform institutional decision-making and team evaluation.

Guidelines help institutions measure their capacity to deliver baccalaureate education in community college settings, whether they be baccalaureate institutions providing "+2" offerings on community college campuses or community colleges offering their own baccalaureate programs. Guidelines should be written to inform and facilitate responsiveness to change, not to stifle it. Moreover, in the hands of Commission evaluators these guidelines should be perceived as useful tools to inform the application of existing criteria and requirements, not as an independent set of criteria, requirements, or standards.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR: The Task Force suggests that the Commission consider developing a third-party, quality review program appropriate for higher education centers.

Although the Task Force's focus was largely on community colleges intending to offer baccalaureate education, some members concluded that multi-institutional higher education centers present a unique opportunity for the Commission. Some centers simply provide a physical setting for many institutions; others are expected to provide students with transparent multi-institutional pathways to degrees; and some expect to play a role in helping participating institutions to develop and deliver new degrees to meet specific educational needs. If non-degree granting higher education centers want some form of Commission recognition, then the Commission might wish to provide for them a new certification program related to but not equivalent to accreditation. Such a program might, among other matters, address how centers can honor the academic integrity of each participating institution.

APPENDIX CONTENTS

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Group Review of Specific Models of Community College Settings Where Baccalaureates are Available

Contemporary Baccalaureate Education Topics

Potential Areas for Recommendations

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Groups' Reviews of Specific Models of Community College Settings Where Baccalaureates are Available

Model 1: Higher Education Centers

Creation

- intent
- consumer demands/expectations
- mission
- resources
- integrity
- purpose
- expedience vs. "common good"

Governance and oversight

- role of faculty
- determination of resources
- guidelines for defining partnership, who's responsible
- accountability system

Implementation

- tuition/financial aid
- resources
- student services
- academic support (produced, recommend)

Model 2: Plus Two

- Do the programs emerge from missions of both provider and recipient? (Criterion 1)
- How do the Institutions ensure high quality teaching and learning? (faculty quality, student preparation…) (Criterion 3)
- How well do the Institutions assess the learning? (Criterion 3)
- Oversight by +2 provider (including faculty) –quality (Criterion 2, 3)
- Oversight of articulation processes (Criterion 2, 3)
- Resources–priority for use/balance (Criterion 2)
  - from CC to support upper division BA
  - from provider to CC
  - student support services (library, financial aid, advising)
- Concern for duplication of efforts/services (Criterion 2)
- Who defines "quality" and how is this assessed and ensured? (Criterion 3)
- Does the provider deliver what they claim? (Criterion 5)

Model 3: Free-Standing Community College Baccalaureates

Accreditation Issues:

Mission and purposes

- why–How does CC retain commitment to culture w/BA
- affordable, accessible
- What is the character? (doesn't specify AA's)

Capacity

- faculty
- facilities
- labs
- resources

Institutional commitment

- obstacles; bureaucratic, political, legal, financial
- sustainability?
- transformation–a long process

Governance

- who decides?

Articulation of purposes

- built on 2-year program?
- equivalent to 4-year program courses?
- starts w/building on Associates degree

Degree name / proper role of research?

- pedagogical at CC?
- Is there needed role in research and what is nature of that role?

Gen Ed path

- universities have packed Gen Ed into 1st 2 years
- can't follow existing patterns
- definition and assessment of Gen Ed outcomes

Who is final arbiter of effectiveness?

- suggested: faculty, governing board, community, legislators, business?

Mission

- role of accreditors in defining
- evolution
- Institutional character

What is the "it?"

- Should applied 4-year degrees have some other name?
- Who decides you can do it?
- What drives the process?

Contemporary Baccalaureate Education Topics

1. Global economy is driving need for cultural diversity and applied language (2 votes)
2. Competence vs. credit hours and grades (9 votes)
3. Where does the curriculum come from? (7 votes)
4. Shortened time to completion (1 vote)
5. Does the culture match w/baccalaureate degree; and is it worth the price for CC? (4 votes)
6. Distinction between applied baccalaureate and regular baccalaureate (12 votes)
7. Specialization as related to liberal arts and general education (8 votes)
8. Relevance of the learning to people's needs and careers (8 votes)
9. Relevance of learning to common good and social needs (4 votes)
10. Access to what? CC's were access to higher education. (no votes)
11. The lack of confidence in high school diploma (combine with 14)
12. Credential creep (1 vote)
13. Increased knowledge base demand in many professions (6 votes)
14. High school education is now expected to mean readiness for college (combine with 11; 3 votes)
15. Ability to learn–processes that go with continuous learning is in greater demand
16. Perception that specialized knowledge is increasing at a faster rate than general knowledge (no votes)
17. Perceived value of baccalaureate degree vs. certification (combine with 23 and 30)
18. Issue of who should be teaching in baccalaureate degree: Institution? Faculty? (1 vote)
19. Market driven context (8 votes)
20. Dramatically changed student demographics (4 votes)
21. Baccalaureate education frequently involves more than on entity: coherence of degrees (6 votes)
22. Mobility of American adults means they don't stay at same institution for full degree (no votes)
23. Competence vs. baccalaureate education (combine with 17 and 30)
24. Emergence of competition from industry: people can get it elsewhere (1 vote)
25. Role of technology in distance learning: Can it deliver more than technical skills, knowledge? (6 votes)
26. Need to satisfy the number of degrees demanded by business and industry (2 votes)
27. Legislatively imposes accountability standards–driven by business and industry expectations (3 votes)
28. General education: conflict between subject matter and general intellectual skills (5 votes)
29. What do we know about the best baccalaureate programs? (3 votes)
30. What about the people with the equivalent of baccalaureate knowledge and experience who might be hired by community college to teach baccalaureate courses?
(combine with 17 and 23; 9 votes)

Potential Areas for Recommendations

Small Groups were organized to generate possible areas for recommendations. The complete listing of topics recommended is included here.

Group 1

1. Mission and purposes
   - "common good"
   - development of intellectual capacity
2. Institutional capacity
3. Institutional circumstances
4. Governance
   - chain of command, responsibility, authority
5. Accreditation by exception or rule?

Group 2

1. Ensure effective peer review process
   - specialized training or teams
   - think nationally
2. Focus on mission
   - team of CE's
   - institution
   - learn from AQIP
3. Maintain importance of Gen Ed in Baccalaureate
   - alternative paths
   - identify attributes and competencies
4. Give help; nurture alternatives; guidelines

Group 3

1. Clarity of mission (identity issues)
2. Role and nature of Gen Ed in Baccalaureate
3. Balance market demands w/academy values (Who defines content, rigor of BAS?)
4. Guidelines for partnership and the BAS
5. Resources sufficient/diversion/dilution